

Edward Stratemeyer

by Roy B. VanDevier

Edward Stratemeyer was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey, October 4, 1862. His father, Henry Julius Stratemeyer, who came from Germany in 1848 and in 1849 joined the California gold rush, returned to New Jersey to settle the affairs of a brother who had died. Later he married his brother's widow, Anna (Siegel) Stratemeyer, and by her had a daughter and two sons, one of whom was Edward. He attended the public schools of Elizabeth and after his graduation from high school had private tutoring in rhetoric, composition, and literature.

His father was in the wholesale and retail tobacco business. When Edward was a young man he started in business for himself in Newark, operating a stationery, newspaper and magazine store. When he was twenty-five years old he wrote his first long story—18,000 words. It was written on store wrapping paper. He was not satisfied with it so he submitted it to *Golden Days*, a six-cent weekly published in Philadelphia. His father had told him he was wasting time, but when a check arrived for \$75.00 the elder Stratemeyer changed his mind about his son's skill as a fiction writer and encouraged him to write more. The serial was entitled, "Victor Horton's Idea," it was printed in *Golden*

Days, Vol. 10, Nos. 49-53, Nov. 2nd to Nov. 30th, 1889. His second serial was entitled, "Captain Bob's Secret; or, The Treasures of Bass Island," it was printed in the same story paper, Vol. 11, Nos. 16-26, March 15, to May 24, 1890. Stratemeyer also wrote under the name of "Ralph Hamilton" which was a stock name for *Golden Days*.

His mother suggested that he use a pen name, so he adopted the nom de plume "Arthur M. Winfield," the "Arthur" meaning "author," the M standing for "Millions" and the "Winfield" being self explanatory.

He was married March 25, 1891, to Magdalene B., daughter of Silas Van Camp of Newark, N. J., and had two daughters: Harriet and Edna.

Stratemeyer wrote for Munsey's *Argosy* and later joined Street and Smith as editor of *Good News*, a boys' weekly. There he had his first book published, "Richard Dare's Venture," (the first volume of "Bound to Succeed Series.") He published a monthly, later changed to a weekly, *Bright Days*.

Three other volumes were issued but the first successful series—the "Old Glory Series"—began with "Under Dewey at Manila," which he began to write the day after the victory of May 1st, 1898. It went through over twenty editions.

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Mr. Stratemeyer received hundreds of letters from boys who read his books asking either what the hero was going to do in the next book in the series or where a school mentioned in a book was located. Some times the girls who wrote to him, almost without exception, wanted to know how soon the hero of a particular book would marry his best girl.

Stratemeyer attributed his success to the fact that he gave his boy readers what they wanted in the fiction line, regardless of what critics had to say about it. Boys were his critics, he said. Alger once told Mr. Stratemeyer that critics arraigned the former because all of his books were quite similar.

In 1899 he started the famous "Rover Boys" Series for Young Americans, most popular of all his works, of which over five million copies were sold. A record for a cloth-bound series. Of all his books, more than 12,000,000 have been sold in cloth and, of the older volumes, a few million more in paper covers. (For references to these sales: See Newark Evening News; May 12, 1930 and New York Times: May 13, 1930).

The number of copies of his books sold, include only those in which he wrote unassisted. Of these he wrote over one hundred and fifty books.

He was associate editor of Young Sports of America, 1895-96, after number 22, title was changed to Young People of America, a weekly story paper for young people, to which he contributed many fine serials, under his own name and under the pen names of "Capt. Ralph Bonehill," "P. T. Barnum, Jr.," "Theodore Edison," "Albert Lee Ford," "Roy Rockwood," "Ed Ward," "Capt. Young of Yale," "Philip A. Alyer" and "Clarence Young." He also wrote for Golden Hours and the American Boy. He used the nom de plume "Arthur M. Winfield" for the first time in the Argosy story paper, Vol. 14, No. 494, May 21, 1892, the serial was entitled, "Fighting for his own; or, The Fortunes of a young artist." It was printed in cloth binding under the same

title in 1897 by the W. L. Allison Company of New York City, under the author's own name.

On August 3rd, 1904, Edward Stratemeyer finished a fine book, entitled, "The Island Camp; or, The Young Hunters of Lakeport." This book was written under the nom de plume of "Captain Ralph Bonehill," and it was published by A. S. Barnes & Company in September, 1904.

I have a very fine copy of this book in the first edition; in dust jacket in my collection by this famous author. This book is very rare: I had to pay \$35.00 for my copy several years ago. This book is volume one of "The Outdoor Series," and I have also volume two "The Winning Run; or, The Baseball Boys of Lakeport" in the same series, written under the same nom de plume. This second volume was finished by the author on March 15, 1905 and was published by the same firm in October, 1905. This book is very rare also; the Library of Congress doesn't have this title in their Catalogue. I have a very nice copy of this book in my collection and I paid only fifty cents for it.

I would like to quote the first few lines from "The Island Camp:"

"How many miles have we still to go, Harry?"

"I think about four," answered Harry, as he looked around him on the country road he and his brother were traveling. "I must say, I didn't think the walk would be such a long one, did you?"

"There used to be signboards on all of these roads, but I heard Joel Runnell tell that some tramps had taken them down and used them for firewood."

In 1906 Stratemeyer founded his Literary Syndicate in New York City and employed many writers of juvenile fiction to elaborate plots which he supplied into book-length stories. Under this plan were produced the "Motor Boys" and "Tom Swift" Series for boys. Stratemeyer also wrote for girls and for children of younger years. Some of these he wrote himself, with succeeding volumes written

by his staff authors on plots he originated. "The Bobbsey Twins," "Bunny Brown" and "His Sister Sue," "Six Little Bunkers," were only a few of the many series he planned. He owned copyrights on more than 800 books. (See Newark Evening News, May 12, 1930).

Mr. Stratemeyer died at his home on May 10, 1930; and interment was in Elizabeth, N. J.

The first book that I read of Stratemeyer's was "With Boone on the Frontier; or, The Pioneer Boys of Old Kentucky." I read it about forty-five years ago. It was written under his pen name "Captain Ralph Bonehill," and it was finished by him on July 1, 1903. It sure was a fine story and I would like to quote the first few lines from this fine book:

"Hark, Joe, What was that?"

"It sounded like the report of a gun, Harry. But I didn't imagine that anybody was within gunshot of this place outside of ourselves."

"That was what I was thinking. Do you imagine any of those Indians we met yesterday had guns?" went on Harry Parsons thoughtfully.

"I didn't see any," answered Joe Winship."

Stratemeyer was the author of "Bound To Succeed Series" 1894-99; "Ship and Shore Series" 1894-1900; "Working Upward Series" 1897-1903; "Minute Boys Series" 1898-99; "Old Glory Series" 1898-1901; "Soldiers of Fortune Series" 1900-06; "Between Boer and Briton" 1900; "American Boys' Biographical Series" 1901-04; "Joe, the surveyor" 1903; "Great American Industries Series" 1903; "Larry, the Wanderer" 1904; "Colonial Series" 1901-06; "Pan-American Series" 1902-11; "Lakeport Series" 1908-12; "Defending His Flag" 1907; "First at the North Pole" 1909 and "Dave Porter Series" 1905-19.

Under the nom de plume of "Arthur M. Winfield," "Bright and Bold Series" 1897; "Rover Boys' Series" 1899-1926; "Winfield Series" 1901-02; "Bob, the Photographer" 1902; "Mark Dale's Stage Venture" 1902; "Silver Lake Series" 1902; "Young Bank

Clerk" 1902 and the "Putnam Hall Series" 1905-11.

Under the nom de plume of "Capt. Ralph Bonehill," "Young Sportsman Series" 1897; "Young Hunters Series" 1897-1900; "Flag of Freedom Series" 1899-1902; "Mexican War Series" 1900-02; "Bonehill Series" 1901-02; "Neka, The Boy Conjurer" 1902; "The Frontier Series" 1903-06; "The Outdoor Series" 1904-05 and the "Boy Hunters Series." 1906-10.

Under the nom de plume of "Roy Rockwood," "Rambling Boys Series for Young Americans" 1900 and "Deep Sea Series" 1905-08.

Under the nom de plume of "Allen Chapman," "Boys of Spring Hill" 1900; "Boys of Business Series" 1903-09 and "Darewell Chums Series" 1908-11.

Under the nom de plume of "Laura Lee Hope," "Bobbsey Twins Series," first three volumes, 1904-07.

(to be continued)

NEWSY NEWS

Rev. Walter F. Tunks, member of our "Dime Novel Round-up" and retired rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Akron, Ohio, suffered a heart attack and died January 14, 1958, while deep sea fishing off West Palm Beach, Florida. He had been an active collector of dime novels and often referred to them in comparisons with the modern day "comic" book.

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